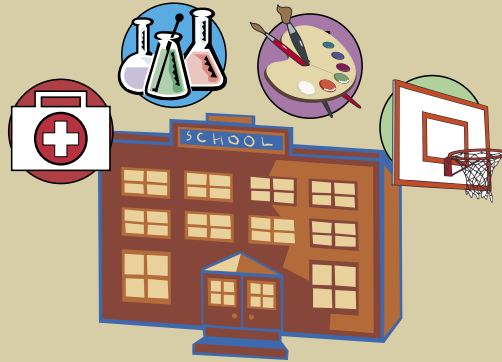


Hazardous Waste

Under the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) regulations, a hazardous waste is a waste specifically listed because it contains certain chemicals that are harmful to human health or the environment, or it exhibits hazardous properties, such as being ignitable, corrosive, reactive or toxic. Hazardous wastes from schools are most often generated in science laboratories, shop and art rooms, photography studios and maintenance operations. Hazardous wastes found in schools can include solvents, alcohols, paint thinners, paints and stains, acids, bases, photographic chemicals, batteries, toxic metals, automobile fluids, pesticides and lamps.



Instruments containing mercury can be found virtually anywhere on school property – in the nurse's office, science rooms, gymnasiums, art rooms and boiler rooms.

In New York State, generators of hazardous waste (including schools) are required to determine the type and quantity of hazardous waste they generate each month. The amount of hazardous waste generated is the total of all hazardous waste per address, excluding any universal wastes. Based on this determination, they are then classified as a Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generator (CESQG), Small Quantity Generator (SQG) or Large Quantity Generator (LQG). Most often, schools are CESQGs, generating no more than 220 pounds of listed and/or characteristic hazardous waste per calendar month. On occasion, a school may be a SQG, generating between 220 and 2,200 pounds of hazardous waste per month.

Regulatory requirements for the management of these wastes vary based on generator classification. For more specific information regarding hazardous waste generation and the latest regulatory requirements regarding mercury wastes, please contact the NYSDEC Division of Solid and Hazardous Materials, Bureau of Hazardous Waste Regulation or visit the NYSDEC mercury web page. Contact information is provided at the end of this document.

Hazardous Wastes Containing Mercury

In New York State, the following items commonly found in schools are classified as hazardous wastes when being disposed of, due to mercury content, and are required to be properly managed:

- ❑ **Elemental mercury¹ - containers of unused mercury**
- ❑ **Mercury fever and laboratory thermometers**
- ❑ **Mercury gauges: manometers, barometers, vacuum**
- ❑ **Mercury spectral tubes**
- ❑ **Mercury switches and relays**
- ❑ **Mercury blood pressure units**
- ❑ **Mercury water flow meters and gas pressure regulators**
- ❑ **Spill cleanup materials contaminated with mercury**

¹*Elemental mercury that has not been used (such as surplus mercury removed from a laboratory's chemical supply inventory) is excluded from being a hazardous waste, as a commercial chemical product, when destined for reclamation, under the provisions of 6NYCRR Part 371.1 (c)(4)(iii).*

Universal Wastes Containing Mercury

Universal Wastes are hazardous wastes meeting certain criteria, which make them eligible for reduced, streamlined regulatory requirements. In New York State, the following materials for disposal are hazardous wastes commonly found in schools and may be managed under the less stringent Universal Waste Rule:

- ❑ **Batteries such as nickel-cadmium, lead-acid, lithium and mercury-containing button type**
- ❑ **Lamps such as fluorescent, mercury vapor, metal halide and high pressure sodium**
- ❑ **Thermostats containing a metallic mercury ampule**
- ❑ **Pesticides meeting certain conditions for being unwanted, recalled, suspended or cancelled**

Recycling/Disposing of Hazardous/Universal Waste

All schools must establish a program for the proper collection and removal (recycling/disposal) of hazardous and universal wastes. It is illegal and unsafe to dispose of these wastes in the regular trash or down the drain. Three possible options for proper recycling/disposal of these wastes are:

- 1 Schools may be able to make arrangements to recycle/dispose of their hazardous and/or universal wastes with their municipality. This may be done at a household hazardous waste collection event or at a permanent household hazardous waste facility.
- 2 Some schools may coordinate hazardous and/or universal waste recycling/disposal with another municipal department, possibly saving money on transportation and labor costs.
- 3 A school may hire a hazardous waste contractor. Municipal entities and schools may take advantage of State purchasing contracts with certain vendors that provide waste handling (recycling/disposal) services at a pre-negotiated rate. More information on State contracts can be obtained from the New York State Office of General Services (NYSOGS). Contact information is provided at the end of this document.

If Mercury Spills

Never use a vacuum cleaner, mop or broom to clean up a mercury spill! Heat from the vacuum's motor will increase the amount of mercury vapor in the air. Mops and brooms will spread the mercury, making proper cleanup more difficult and costly. The vacuum cleaner, mop or broom will become contaminated and require disposal as hazardous waste.



The State Health Department recommends that containers of elemental mercury identified by staff or found during an inventory be given the highest priority for removal. Should a spill occur, many individuals could be exposed resulting in health effects, significant cleanup costs and widespread environmental contamination. Legislation banning the purchase or use of elemental mercury in primary and secondary schools in New York State became effective September 4, 2004. Check with the Office of Facilities Planning in the State Education Department (518-474-3906) or, in NYC, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety in the Department of Education (718-361-3808) for the latest information about this and other initiatives for removing mercury from schools.

Brochures in this series

- Mercury and Schools: A Risky Combination
- Reducing Mercury in Schools: Superintendents, Principals, and School Boards
- Reducing Mercury in Schools: Science Teachers
- Reducing Mercury in Schools: Buildings and Grounds Superintendents
- Reducing Mercury in Schools: Health and Safety Committees
- Reducing Mercury in Schools: School Nurses
- Facility-Wide Inventory of Mercury and Mercury-Containing Devices
- Guidelines for Cleanup of Mercury Spills
- Disposal and Recycling Options for Mercury and Mercury-Containing Devices

Contact names and numbers

For health questions or to get more brochures:

New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH)
1-800-458-1158, extension 2-7530 or e-mail at ceheduc@health.state.ny.us
www.health.state.ny.us

For questions about recycling and disposal:

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)
Division of Solid and Hazardous Materials, Bureau of Hazardous Waste Regulation
(518) 402-8633
NYSDEC Small Quantity Generator Helpline
1-800-462-6553
www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dshm/redrecy/mercury.htm

To report a spill:

NYSDEC Spill Cleanup and Reporting Hotline
1-800-457-7362

For questions about State contracts:

New York State Office of General Services (NYSOGS) Procurement Services Group
(518) 473-5721
www.ogs.state.ny.us/purchase

For additional information:

www.dec.state.ny.us
NYSDEC Division of Environmental Permits, Pollution Prevention Unit
(518) 402-9469

In New York City:

To report a mercury spill in a NYC Public School or to get more information about mercury, call the Department of Education Office of Environmental Health and Safety at 718-361-3808.

To report a mercury spill in a private NYC school call 3-1-1 and ask to be connected to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) HazMat.

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NOTE:

These fact sheets are intended to provide information and lessons learned. They are not intended to replace school district requirements for training and personal protective equipment.



Learn how to properly manage and recycle mercury and items containing mercury. It's the law. Disposal of mercury wastes in the regular trash or down the drain is illegal and unsafe.